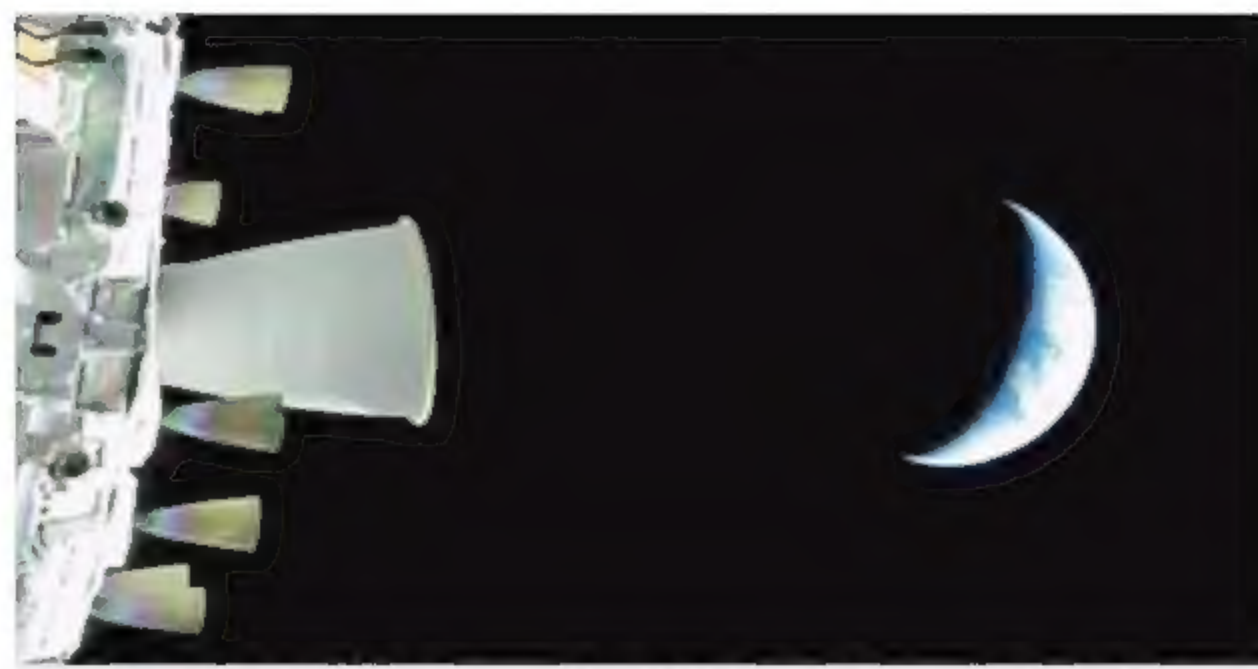




THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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A photo taken by Artemis II commander Reid Wiseman from a window of the Moon-bound space capsule, shows a curved slice of Earth | AP/PTI | P11



INS Aridhaman ahead of its commissioning ceremony | P11

With INS Aridhaman, India gets 3rd N-sub

JAVARIA RANA @ New Delhi

INDIA on Friday commissioned its third nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN), INS Aridhaman, in a key step towards establishing continuous at-sea nuclear deterrence and strengthening the most survivable leg of its strategic triad.

There was no official word yet on the commissioning of Aridhaman but sources confirmed it. Reports said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi attended the commissioning ceremony held at a frontline naval base.

With this, India has three operational SSBN fleet. INS Arihant (commissioned in 2016) and INS Arighaat (2024) are the other two SSBNs. This meets the minimum requirement for sustained deterrent patrol cycles, with at least one submarine deployed at all times while others undergo maintenance.

Aridhaman can carry up to eight K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) or a greater number of shorter-range K-15 missiles depending on requirements.

SSBNs are considered the most dependable second-strike capability given their stealth and survivability.

Earlier in the day, Navy's new warship INS Taragiri was commissioned at Visakhapatnam. In his address, the defence minister described INS Taragiri as a symbol of India's growing technological prowess.

China has six SSBNs, Pak none

China has 6 Jin-class SSBNs and 6-8 Shang-class nuclear-powered attack submarines, alongside a conventional submarine force of 50 vessels. Pakistan does not possess nuclear-powered submarines



It's not words but power, 'Aridhaman'

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in a cryptic post on X in Hindi, hinting at the commissioning of INS Aridhaman

First US jet downed in Iran

F-15E shot down; US forces rescue one crew member; search on for the second

AGENCIES @ Tehran/Dubai

IN the first known loss of a US fighter jet inside Iran since the start of the war, Iran reportedly shot down an F-15E on Friday. The number of persons on board was not immediately known but reports said the jet had a weapons-systems officer, apart from the pilot.

Iranian media said the pilot appeared to have ejected, as no body parts were recovered from the site. A local television channel also broadcast visuals of the downed jet.

Tehran immediately offered a bounty for the pilot and urged people to hand the "enemy" over to police.

In parallel, the US launched a high-risk search and rescue mission deep inside Iran. Iranian media shared images of US fleet, including planes, helicopters, and drones, flying over Iran's Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province.

Multiple reports said one crew member was rescued by the US team and efforts were on

to locate the other.

If Iran gets hold of the second person, it could change the course of the war as Tehran could use the US citizen as a bargain chip and extract concessions from Washington.

The Trump administration has not officially confirmed the loss of the aircraft or commented on the fate of the crew. US Central Command, which is responsible for military operations in West Asia tried to play down the damage claiming all its aircraft were accounted for, but major US media outlets reported that an F-15E jet went down.

F-15E Strike Eagle is a high-speed, two-seat fighter jet with increased fuel capacity for extended combat.

Around the same time the US jet went down on Friday afternoon, blasts rocked Tehran.

The downing of the US fighter jet comes on the eve of the UN Security Council voting on a draft resolution proposed by Bahrain on reopening the Strait of Hormuz.



Missile launchers: 50% intact

US intelligence estimates that around half of Iran's ballistic missile launchers are still intact. Some of them are unusable as they are buried under rubble. Besides, Iran has thousands of attack drones stockpiled and ready for use

Fired: US army chief chucked

US Army Chief of Staff Randy George was on Friday fired by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. Gen Christopher LaNeve will be stepping in as acting Army chief of staff, the Pentagon said

LPG: Tanker on way to India

A ship with 44,000 kt of LPG is en route to India after crossing the Strait of Hormuz. Two other vessels — Green Asha and Jag Vikram — are expected to arrive in the coming days | P12

Woman techie from Kerala on trek goes missing in Kodagu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Madikeri

A woman trekker, who is a techie from Kerala, went missing from Tadiandamol, the highest peak of Kodagu district, on Thursday. The police, forest officials and local residents have launched a search operation to trace her. Sharanya GS (36), who hails from Kerala, was visiting Kodagu when she went missing.

On Thursday morning, a group of around ten trekkers started on the Tadiandamol trail in the morning after receiving permission from the forest department.

Sharanya, a solo traveler from Kochi in Kerala, arrived at the foothill of the peak alone and sought permission to trek the trail. But as the belt has wild elephant movement, foresters at the checkpoint asked her to join the other trekkers and walk the trail with them. But while the other trekkers returned from the peak in the evening, Sharanya was missing.

The foresters at the checkpoint immediately got into action and started the search operation. The police, who had been alerted, too joined them along with local residents. The search continued till midnight, but could not trace Sharanya.



Sharanya GS

CONTINUED ON: P6

EXPRESS READ

Santosh Hegde collapses on stage

Bengaluru: Former Lokayukta Justice N Santosh Hegde collapsed on stage during a programme in the city on Friday. He was rushed to a hospital where he is doing well, said Speaker UT Khader | P5

Guv seeks review of third language grading

Bengaluru: The Lok Bhavan (governor's office) has urged Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh to review the government's decision to award only grades, and not marks, for the third language in SSLC exams | P4

Naxal-hit dists in India scaled down to two

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

AHEAD of the March 31 deadline set for eliminating the Naxal footprint, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs had convened a high-level review meeting to assess the status of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)

across the country.

What followed was a revised categorisation of LWE affected districts under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme, which determines the allocation of Central funds and security resources, sources said.

As per the fresh classifica-

tion, only two districts — Bijapur in Chhattisgarh and West Singhbhum in Jharkhand — have now been designated as 'LWE Affected Districts', sources said, adding that Kanker district in Chhattisgarh has been placed under the 'District of Concern' category



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